



Ambassador Jeffrey L. Bleich – Iftar Dinner Remarks

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**Remarks of Ambassador Bleich  
at an Iftar Dinner  
at the Official Residence, Canberra**

*(As prepared for delivery – September 2, 2010)*

Welcome. On behalf of President Obama, the People of the United States, and everyone here at the Embassy, we wish you all a happy and blessed Ramadan. Ramadan Kareem.

The United States is a Muslim nation, as it is a Jewish, Christian, Hindu Nation and a Nation of all faiths. We were founded on religious freedom, and respect for the importance and practice of all religious faiths. That freedom is enshrined in the First Amendment of our Constitution.

Today, seven million Muslim-Americans freely practice their religion in the United States. Their faith is not merely tolerated but it is embraced as are they. Recent surveys in the U.S., show that Muslim-Americans are profoundly engaged in American life and are on average more educated and affluent than the national average. Our nation is stronger because of Muslim-Americans' involvement and their great contributions to America's political, military, business, scientific, and cultural affairs.

As we speak, we welcome home U.S. Muslim and non-Muslim soldiers alike who are returning to their homes from Iraq. Others pray in remote parts of Afghanistan or pray for those who are there. We pray for their safety and for their safe return. Their effort seeks to protect us from those who degrade and debase the teachings of Islam. The Holy Koran teaches that whoever kills an innocent, it is as if he killed all mankind; and whoever saves a person, it is as if he has saved all mankind. This is the great Islamic faith. That faith, shared by over a billion people, is more power than the narrow hatred of a few.

Muslims and non-Muslims alike also pray for those suffering in the Muslim world from natural disasters, particularly the devastating floods in Pakistan. Over 20 million members of the human family – a number the size of Australia's population – is affected by these floods. In a crisis such as this, all faiths are joined as one in Pakistan. U.S. citizens are delivering over \$200M in humanitarian aid and another \$1.5 billion each year over the next five years to help build schools hospitals, roads, and businesses. Americans at home and abroad have been donating to the relief effort. And here at our Embassy and



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consulate we have joined with local efforts to help the Pakistani people through this crisis.

We see bonds strengthening across the world. President Obama has signed a new strategic partnership with Indonesia, the nation with the world's largest Muslim population. Tonight he dined with President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu, along with the leaders of Egypt and Jordan to advance the cause of peace in the Middle East.

It is with these signs of hope and peace, and in the season's spirit of introspection and reaffirmation of faith, that we join in celebration with you tonight. We stand in solidarity with the Muslim community of Australia, and we are honored to celebrate this gathering with you.

Ramadan Mubarak

Please join Becky and me now for dessert and coffee in the Library.